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ART. V. — *Margaret ; a Tale of the Real and Ideal, Blight and Bloom ; including Sketches of a Place not before described, called Mons Christi.* Boston : Jordan and Wiley. 1845. 12mo. pp. 460.

To write a story which shall find a market would not seem to be a very difficult undertaking, if we may judge from the ship-loads of such matters which find a rejoicing welcome, and the multitudes of men, so called, besides women and children, who fall, with a wolf-like appetite, on husks, which, if the lower animals were readers, would appear intended for creatures much lower than mankind. But to mature a novel which shall command the respect of really intelligent persons, which shall impress more on the second reading than the first, and which powerful minds can resort to for impulse and invigoration, is what few of the multitudes who have attempted it have been able to do ; because it requires a richness of attainment, a cheerful and sympathizing spirit, a wide-reaching mastery of style, together with a clear and strong good sense, which are seldom found united in any single mind. It may seem strange to hear this last attribute mentioned as a chief element of success, when it is one of the last gifts and graces which the habitual novel-reader is likely to possess himself, or to demand in others ; nevertheless, it is so. It has been abundantly proved by experiment, that sagacious common sense is necessary for the management of the various materials, for the control and guidance of fancy, and for bringing all to bear on the impression which it is desired to stamp in the mind and heart. One may apply to this quality what William Penn said to the recorder of London, when that potentate told him, after repeated demands, that he was guilty by the common law. “ Friend, if that law of which thou speakest be common, methinks it should not be so hard to produce.” Hard to produce examples of this common sense, in this department of literature, it certainly is ; so much the sins and sorrows, the quarrels and eccentricities, of authors will sadly tell. And this is one great reason why Scott and Miss Edgeworth still keep their high stations, defying all efforts to displace them. How far it is a gift of nature, and how far it may be formed by experience and reflection, it is not easy to tell ; but without it, no writ-

er of fiction will ever make a satisfactory impression, or secure a lasting and unquestioned fame.

But the highest gifts and powers would find themselves at fault in the attempt to construct a story as a vehicle for the expression of doctrines and opinions ; most probably they would not attempt it. A transparency cannot be a very good picture, and great artists will leave it to other hands. It is true, that St. Pierre, in his *Paul and Virginia*, intended to show the evils of artificial society in contrast with the blessings of simple and unpretending life ; but it is equally true, that no reader cares for or thinks of the moral ; so that it is only because the fiction is not what he meant it should be, that it met with such brilliant success. There are many such cases, in which the writer begins with that intention, but finds himself obliged to give up the doctrine or the story. So in Miss Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy*, the doctrine is put out of the way as the story advances, and afterwards attached to it as if by a wafer or a string ; the reader removes the obstruction to his operation, and treats the work like any other fiction. But in works of a graver cast, where the moral is too precious to be thus cavalierly treated, the doctrine is sure to crush down the narrative with its weight. The sable fleet of religious novels, oppressed with their leaden cargo, have shown marvellous alacrity in sinking where they were never heard of more ; and the whole history of these experiments proves, that there is an inherent unfitness in this form of communication for any such purposes. Such truths must be presented to minds in a different state from that in which novels find and leave them. There is something praiseworthy in the attempt, no doubt ; but it is not every one who has the power to become all things to all men ; and this adaptation, however well intended, must have regard to its metes and bounds. Had the great English moralist, in the exercise of his high vocation, presented himself in a ballroom, in order to create sympathy by assimilating himself to the fashions there prevailing, he probably, as he swept through the dance like a mastodon, demolishing light, fantastic toes without number, would have alarmed the sons and daughters of pleasure by his stormy gyrations more than he would have fascinated them by putting on their manners and graces ; and every professed teacher places himself at equal disadvantage, when he parts with

the character which is natural to him, to assume, even for the best reasons, a disguise which he knows not how to wear.

When the writer's professed object is to present and sustain new theories of social life, the difficulty is greater yet ; because the first question with respect to them is, " Are they practicable ? " It is easy to frame beautiful systems, and to plan vast improvements ; but when they are brought to the test of action, unforeseen difficulties often appear. Like the wings of the schemer in *Rasselas*, however nicely calculated for the resistance of the air and the weight they are to carry, as soon as they are spread for a flight, the neck of the inventor is in much danger, and the merit of the contrivance is set at rest. To show that a theory works well in a novel is not enough to silence the doubter ; there the elements of success are more under control and less refractory than they are found in real life ; the Utopian experiment, that is, the one tried nowhere, is not precisely the thing to convince opposers. Neither is it enough to show that the existing state of things requires improvement ; this will be the case in the happiest state of existence here below ; but it may be undeniable that things are bad as they are, and yet not by any means clear that our inventions would make them better. And when both the old abuses and the new improvements are set before us in imaginary forms, the former overstated as is common in fiction, and the latter wholly untried in practice, and therefore somewhat visionary in their aspect, all reasoning and inference are too shadowy and unsubstantial to make any impression on those who do not already sympathize with the theorist in his aversion for the old and his passion for the new.

One of the doctrines intimated in this work is the sufficiency of every mind to itself, thus implying that every human spirit can solve for itself the problem of existence, and work out from its own resources an idea of God and eternity, sufficient to satisfy the wants of the soul. A Christian apostle has stated, that men might have become acquainted with the divine power and existence from the suggestion of created things ; but it must be understood that they might have done so, had they begun aright, by listening to the intimations of nature from without, and paying respect to the voice of conscience within. Had this been the course of mankind from the beginning, no doubt they might have travelled in the

ascending path of light far beyond what can be seen or even imagined now. But that any single mind, exposed to depraving influences, with its selfish and worldly passions constantly tempted into strong action, could clear an atmosphere and form a field of vision for itself, so as to discern those heavenly things which are invisible to other eyes, requires to be established by stronger evidence than a fictitious illustration can supply. For the human race had a tolerable allowance of time to make these discoveries for themselves, and yet, though powerful minds bent their energies in that direction, they made no approach to success. If they could not do it in some thousand years, it does not seem likely that they can do it at all. It is true, that a sense of dependence suggested that there was some higher power ; but this gives little satisfaction, without some knowledge of his character and our relations to him. If we feel a presence near us at deep midnight, it gives us no confidence ; it is rather an oppressive and fearful mystery. It is not till we recognize it as the presence of a friend, that it can possibly encourage and strengthen us. And it was in this painful way alone that men felt the divine presence in the ages before Christianity, and so, without a revelation, they would feel it still. Now it may be admitted, that men of themselves might discover the divine existence ; but what would the knowledge avail them, without such information of his character as to make that knowledge a blessing to the heart ? We do not understand this author as maintaining, however, that the minds of children can work out the full disclosure for themselves ; but only as intimating that they are better off without such religious instruction as is commonly given them than with it. In this we do not agree with him ; for, though uncouth, imperfect, and unworthy, it at least conveys the impression of something which is considered important ; and therefore, when communicated in good faith and sincerity, it is better than none.

Our author also intends to convey an idea of New England life and character by representing a community which has grown up under a form of Christianity. He paints them as coarse, selfish, and worldly, with hardly an exception ; indulging in dishonesty, intemperance, and other vices, unreproved, and to such an extent as to excite the contempt and aversion of a child, who herself had grown up among degrad-

ed associates in a drunkard's home. What can it be which induces all who give a representation of New England to make it so desperately vulgar ? In the name of common sense, is it true, that there is nobody but Sam Slick extant in this part of the habitable globe ? Sharp and selfish many are, no doubt, but not in a greater proportion than elsewhere ; and it is a fact, though no one would suspect it from such writings, that there are hearts and souls here ; hearts as true and souls as spiritual as in other parts of the world. We hardly know how to explain this perversion of the truth, except from the tendency of the pencil, in the hands of an unpractised painter, to caricature ; for every one, who knows what real refinement of feeling is, must have found much of it in the humblest places of the land. And as for kind affections, the author is true to nature when, in a beautiful passage of his work, he represents the villagers as turning out with self-forgotful and deep feeling to find the child, the heroine of his story, who was wandering in the woods when a whirlwind passed through them. Nothing can be better than the description of enmities laid aside, and cares and interests forgotten, while all engage with unanimous impulse in this labor of love. Whence came these affections, flashing out with such brightness at such a time ? Had Christianity nothing to do in forming them ? Would they have been found to the same extent in any but a Christian land ? There were those who distilled ardent spirit, and those who sold and drank it ; but it does not appear that this was done in consequence of instructions from the pulpit to that effect ; nor could the clergymen be condemned for not denouncing such things, when no one suspected them to be sins. Father Matthew, had he lived in that day, would have taken his glass with others. The impressions thus given are neither according to nature nor truth.

Too much of the work, probably because the author was describing that which he personally knew little about, is liable to the same objection with the account of the ordination dinner, on the 228th page, which has just enough of fact to save it from being called an entire misrepresentation, and enough of travesty to give an entirely false impression of the men and times which it describes ; men cheerful and natural in their manners, but worthily respected, and at least as holy as those who have come after them ; and times which, though

abounding in their own peculiar temptations, were exempt from some of the sins of a later day. On the whole, the view of that state of society which the author has given is not only dreary and disgusting, but one-sided and unjust ; it is not drawn from the living reality of those times, but from a theoretical imagination of what, in his view, they are likely to have been.

The author has also fallen into a sort of cant, which prevails quite extensively at the present day, and threatens to abound yet more. It is the angry lamentation over the fallen church ; as if Christianity was better represented anywhere and everywhere than in the lives and bearing of those who profess it. Every one who has a wild opinion which Christians regard with indifference ; every one who has some fantastical remedy for social evils which the good sense of Christians rejects ; every one who, under some transparent pretext of philanthropy, indulges his selfish and savage passions, turns upon the church, as if it was the source of all human guilt and woe. Now, it is quite certain that the church, as it is their pleasure to call it, is by no means true to its profession nor to its design ; but the question is, To what set of men could its influence be transferred with any advantage ? And where are those who better represent the spirit of their Master ? The church, it must be remembered, is made up of men. They are influenced and tempted like others in this strange world ; but that they are less faithful than others is more easy to say than to prove. They ought, indeed, to be more so ; and we have no doubt that they are more faithful than others ; immeasurably in advance of those whose joy it is to abuse them. But it is so easy to compound with one's conscience in this way, and to assume to one's self the praise of excellence without taking pains to reach it, that we can hardly expect men to deny themselves the self-glorifying satisfaction which it is such a comfort to possess. Accordingly, we find great numbers who endeavour to pass for holy and humane at the expense of nothing but words. To revel in this pleasing self-indulgence requires no other exertion on their part than is necessary to run others down ; so that not only are the consciences of individuals deeply wounded by the sins of other people, but we see great nations, with all manner of social evils and outrages untouched at home, sending their moral sense abroad to denounce abuses in foreign

lands, which are evidently recommended to their humanity by the circumstance, that, inasmuch as those abuses are out of their reach, they are not called upon to redress them. It is a good suggestion to such persons, which is written where they perhaps are not very likely to find it, "Let them show piety at home."

Speaking of reformers, our times offer a curious problem, and one which a future age may find it less difficult to solve than the present. When it is the glory of the age, that the principle of love has been discovered and applied, applied to the hearts of men with a success which fills the world with wonder; when the world, after hammering on evils for some thousand years in the vain endeavour to overcome them with evil, has tried the experiment of overcoming them with good, and has found that it can be triumphantly done,—how happens it that many who pass for reformers are perpetually using language and breathing out a spirit which it would be painfully ridiculous to regard as a manifestation of love? It would be hard to tell what such persons have ever succeeded in reforming; still they insist upon their theory; and when they find that evils only stand the firmer, and that the clear judgment of mankind is not with them, so far from suspecting the soundness of their principles, they turn in wrath on their cooler advisers, representing them as the abettors and upholders of all the wrongs which they are striving to overthrow. The truth seems to be, that such persons are but half awakened to the truth. They have gone far enough in the right direction to see the guilt and danger of existing evils, but not to reach the faintest comprehension of the spirit of Christian love. Suddenly startled from their indifference, they have been impatient to do something, and, without reflecting whether they could do any good, have dashed hastily into any door of reform which stood open near them. Passion supplied the place of humanity, which had not yet risen in their hearts; and as no other objects of wrath were near them, they fastened with teeth and nails on their neighbours who were standing quietly at their side. While others cannot see very clearly the good they are accomplishing, they look upon their own exploits with singular satisfaction, as every cock in the morning doubtless exults in believing that the day never would have broken but for him. We do not mean to class our author with these grotesque reformers,

who bear no great resemblance to apostles, except it be that their language is somewhat like Peter's when he asseverated that he did not know his Master. Something of their want of reverence for the Scriptures may be traced in him ; but he has not their strong personal reasons for hostility to the ninth commandment. Without their harshness and violence, he fails in general sympathy for others, and therefore awakens little in them. This, indeed, is one of the chief faults in the book, — a kind of hardness that runs through it ; when it pleads the true cause of humanity, it gives no impression of tenderness ; it breathes out an intellectual philanthropy ; its fountains do not seem to spring in the heart.

We say so much of reformers, because the chief apparent object of this work is to present an example of social reform, the scene of which is a village where the general tone of morals and manners was coarse, selfish, and vicious ; more so, we imagine, than it could have been anywhere in New England even at the close of the Revolution ; though it was the fact, that the difficulties and disasters of the war left their marks behind them for many a weary day. Industry and enterprise were suspended ; places of gossiping resort were of course frequented ; and men sought for that happiness in low and idle amusement, or sensual forgetfulness, which, in better times, they would have found in the successful exertion of their physical, social, and spiritual powers. Now the question arises, What remedy can be applied to such a state of things, and in general to those unworthy aspects of social life which everywhere abound ? The inquiry is a serious one, and at this moment engages the deep thought and feeling of many earnest hearts. We do not speak of those absurd persons who are perpetually thrusting themselves before the public eye, little heeding the indifference and contempt with which it regards them ; who might be aptly represented by the widow in this book, with her quack nostrums for all disorders of the system ; remedies which, by their sale, were beneficial to the inventor, but detrimental in the extreme to the victim who might be induced to take them. Such persons, who are sorrowful examples of want of wisdom and power to guide themselves, yearly assemble in conventions to discuss their plans for the world's regeneration, all of which are like the surgical process lately suggested for complaints of the heart, which was to take it

out through the side, cleanse it of disease, and then replace it ; a process attended with the essential difficulty, that it would cease to go meantime and for ever. Utterly undismayed by objections, and case-hardened against derision, they wear their fool's caps with as much grace and grandeur as if they were royal crowns ; nor do they feel in the least the force of the hint distinctly given them, that the world will mind its own business if they will attend to theirs.

One thing seems common to these worthies ; they have no confidence in the Christian religion as an instrument for their purposes ; and as they evidently know nothing about it except the name, it is hardly to be expected that they should understand its power. This author, however, is aware that there is no power sufficient to this great reform, except that which resides in Christianity ; and his idea is, that, if it can be set free from the corruptions which restrain its energies, and brought into direct communication with human hearts, it will bring their powers and affections into such full and harmonious action, that, like active human frames, they will resist the infection of prevailing disease, when those which lie unexerted will be sure to receive it, and to linger on in wasting decline, a burden to themselves, and losing all power to bless and serve their race. This is undoubtedly the truth ; but it is not so clear that the want of power is owing to the particular form in which the religion manifests itself, nor that it would become efficient at once if its forms of doctrine or service were altered. There are those who make too much of forms on the superstitious side, when they treat them as substitutes for duty and devotion ; and others ascribe too much to them on the hostile side, when they consider them as determining the religious character, which is shaped and fashioned by other influences that work deeper in the heart. If a portion of doctrinal forms were wholly corrupt and unsound, and others were pure from earthly admixture, it might be so. But this is not the case ; for every sect has its portion of truth ; without it the sect could not have existed. Error is nothing but a name and a delusion ; and as we may see in popular fancies and superstitions, that no one subsists for any length of time without some basis of truth under it, so we find, on inquiring into religious systems, that each one contains some truth which either is not contained, or not set prominently forth, in the others ; and therefore,

instead of bringing all to a single form by a rejection of the rest, the true reform would be for each to give and receive, each imparting what is good in its views and its influence to others, and cordially welcoming in return whatever light and inspiration they may be able to bestow. It must be remembered that these forms are not arbitrarily and capriciously taken up ; except, perhaps, in a few cases. In general, they must have established themselves in the mind and heart of numbers by some stronger power than that of accidental association. There must have been some reason for their first adoption, sufficient to account for their past and present existence. It will be found that they expressed the state of mind and heart in the community which embraced them ; they were in accordance with its moral and religious condition ; and when they cease to have this fitness, they will begin to perish ; they will lose all their hold on the general reverence and affection ; and the attempt to sustain them, in a vain traditional existence, will seem as useless and unnatural as to detain a corpse from the grave.

We cannot conceive how any one can fail to see the truth on this subject, when he observes what is passing in the Christian world. There is no danger of any permanent harm from religious forms or parties, when all that their friends can do will hardly keep them in existence. It is evident they are under the operation of an unseen law, which ordains, that, like the red leaves of autumn, when they have ceased to answer the purpose of their existence, they shall pass away. We see the most liberal, as they are called, those which allow so much individual independence that they have hardly sufficient cohesion to call themselves one, as fervor extends itself among them, are like cold water when heat is applied to it, going off in the shape of steam, — not dangerous, as when confined in cylinders, but quietly spreading in the air and finding its place in the clouds ; while those which are held more firmly together by party interest and attraction, and therefore are gathered into larger masses, at the moment when they are exulting in their power and success, become aware of an air-slaking process going on within them, bursting them at first into huge fragments, which defy all attempts at reunion, and are themselves fast crumbling into a general heap of dust. If religious forms ever had much influence upon the times, the times have now

the upper hand, and will take ample vengeance if ever they have suffered wrong. To us it seems clear that the religious forms and systems in the day and the village which our author describes existed not in defiance of light and truth, but simply because the community was not ripe for any other ; and had a better one been proposed to them, it would not have been estimated or even understood. These forms, which are the rallying points of sects and parties, are seen in various lights and relations, as the adherents to them advance or remain stationary. There is no longer any singleness of views, and of course there ceases to be any singleness of feeling. Hence it results that every such association contains the principle of decay within itself ; it will bide its time ; but the eye of the sharp observer, when he traces the first small seam creeping through its walls, though it gives neither alarm nor warning to the inhabitants, knows that it cannot be long before its end shall come.

But suppose that these forms were as important as some believe them ; suppose that they really exerted a controlling influence for good or for evil on those who live under them ; suppose it were possible to remove at pleasure those which we disapprove. How shall their place be supplied ? The Quaker, though a deadly enemy to fashion, must have his garments, and his resistance ends in adopting a fashion of his own. So those who exclaim most fiercely against these religious forms must have some drapery for the religious sentiment, and the question is, What shall it be ? Our author, in the conclusion of his work, appears to have had it in view to present a system of his own, to which we have no particular objection, except that it is his own ; in other words, it is not one that most Christians would accept as a means of inspiring or expressing *their* religious feeling. Like most other suggestions of the kind, it is made only in the spirit of opposition to the old system ; it mistakes reverse of wrong for right, and, when considered as a plan proposed for general adoption, it is liable to the fatal objection, that there is no prevailing state of mind standing ready to give it welcome. The only true course to be pursued by those who would introduce great social improvements is to adopt as a basis the existing state of things. By gradual approach and correction, changes may be made which shall amount at last to a revolutionary, and, all the while, an unconscious,

reform ; whereas, the friend of humanity who exalts himself over the darkness of those around him, and calls on them, with pert flippancy or passionate defiance, to become as wise as he is, and to despise all the present objects of their reverence, is answered with such a quiet intimation as the Jews gave to Herod when he proposed to rebuild their temple, that, before they suffered him to remove a stick of the old building, they should like to see him provide not only the plan, but the materials and resources, for the new.

On the whole, we think that this is a matter which necessarily arranges itself ; that is, it is determined by causes and influences not under the immediate control of human effort, and therefore not to be changed at will. Where the religious principle does not exist, no outward forms of doctrine or service will create it ; and where it does exist in strength and sincerity, it breaks through them at once, and acts independently of them. If there is any want of harmony between Christianity itself and its forms, the form may be left standing till it perhaps sinks in decay ; but the religious principle will be as free in its range and action as if no form was there. It is easy to see, in a great proportion of cases, why these forms are prized and cherished with such fond devotion. With many, the respect is traditional, and taken at second hand from their friends or fathers ; but when they choose for themselves, we can see something in their temperament, character, or habits of thought and feeling, which inclines them to those views and sects with which they will most readily assimilate. And this tendency will not be changed by the strongest demonstration we can give them of the error of their way ; for they feel that it is natural and beneficial to their hearts, if not to ours. Whether we like it or not, we must reconcile ourselves to this state of things so it ever has been, and so it will continue to be. But we may find some comfort in reflecting that the spirit of truth is not confined to any party, nor is it necessarily excluded from any. Whenever it exists in power, it is the same in every party, the same in every breast.

The author makes hostile demonstrations against some institutions which are held in general regard ; against the Sabbath of New England, for example, which so many desire to replace with a Sabbath of their own invention, and which is naturally enough regarded by those who are unaccustomed to

it as a heavy and uninteresting day. There is no doubt, that, in former times, it was observed with a severity which would not consist with our feelings. This writer has given a representation of it as it was half a century ago, showing the general sense of relief which pervaded all hearts, particularly those of the children of the community, when the Sabbath sun went down. But does he suppose that the day, with all its gloom, was forced upon our fathers against nature, and in defiance of their taste and choice? On the contrary, it was a true expression of their taste and feeling; and it came into that tragically solemn form, and stood fast in their reverence, because their hearts pronounced it good. It is true, that a change in the character and feeling of the community was taking place at the period which this writer so well describes; and he is perfectly right in representing them as groaning under its severe restraints, and submitting to it as a heavy burden, because, when it had ceased to be in harmony with their prevailing spirit, it could no longer do them good as before. It is when in this transition state that he describes it; when it was changing from a Judaical stagnation into the interested thoughtfulness and cheerful devotion in which the Sabbath is now spent by those who observe it best. Much speculative wisdom is expended on this subject by some of the lights of our day; sundry doctors maintaining that every day should be a Sabbath, and not appearing to be at all aware that it may result from this principle, if admitted, not that the Sabbath should be dispensed with, but, on the contrary, that it should send its influence through the week, making every day like itself, — a result which, we imagine, will not soon come to pass in the history of those who hold it in light esteem. As for the foolishness of their preaching who maintain that it ought to be given to recreation, as it is in some other lands, it is enough to say, that a fiddling and dancing Sabbath might be very much to their taste, but would be rejected with scorn by every enlightened and thoughtful people. What we need is a day of rest to the body in favor of the mind and heart; and it is because the Sabbath answers to this want of our nature, that it exists and will endure, defying all attempts that can be made to displace it from the reverence and affection of cultivated men. We are glad to see that the hostility of this writer turns only against its errors and abuses, and that his ideal is one in

which all serious persons would agree. "It is the Lord's day to us : in the most exalted sense, it is Christ's own day. All days are holy ; this is the cream of the week. On the spiritual river where we would ever sail, the Sabbath opens into clearer water, a broader bay ; and we can rest on our oars to get a distincter view of the heavenly hills whither we tend."

In one passage of his work, the Sabbath as it was is brought full before us by a few touches of beautiful description.

"It was a Sabbath morning, a June Sabbath morning, a June Sabbath morning in New England. The sun rose over a hushed, calm world, wrapt like a Madonna in prayer. It was The Day, as the Bible is The Book. It was an intersection of the natural course of time, a break in the customary order of events, and lay between, with its walls of Saturday and Sunday night on either side, like a chasm, or a dyke, or a mystical apartment, whatever you would please liken it to. . . . Its light, its air, its warmth, its sound, its sun, the shimmer of the dawn on the brass cock of the steeple, the look of the meetinghouse itself,—all things were not as on other days. And now, when those old Sabbaths are almost gone, some latent, indefinable impression of what they were comes over us, and wrenches us into awe, stillness, and regret."—p. 101.

While we cannot but approve the idea of the Sabbath as our author has here presented it, we cannot say that we have equal confidence in the system of festivals which he has devised in his Arcadian vision ; not that they are inappropriate and inconsistent in themselves, but because they are not in harmony with the genius of our people. The same taste which demands and rejoices in the Sabbath, as a day of spiritual thoughtfulness, will not be likely to thirst for recreations. Pleasures are not required by the happy ; just in proportion as the blessings of physical and moral existence are generally diffused and enjoyed, will such transient excitement be held in diminished esteem. There could hardly be a severer infliction to a serious and earnest native of New England than to be required to enjoy himself, as it is called. Such a penalty might be advantageously substituted for the treadmill in our prisons ; for no person who had once suffered under the discipline would put himself in the way to endure it again. It is not that recreations are not wanted ; for, here

as elsewhere, they are essential to the healthy activity of the mind and heart. But the same pleasures in which some would disport themselves luxuriously would drive others to their wit's end with weariness and disdain. Men must unbend from their severe cares ; but should they lift up their voices to sing, " Away with melancholy," it would be an immediate signal for that unbidden guest to come. Some of the festivals here suggested would bring their own recommendation with them ; such, for example, as that in the spring, when the inhabitants of the village renewed the flowers in the cemetery, transplanted ornamental trees into the streets, and set out shrubbery near their houses. There must be some object and design in a celebration, or it will soon lose its place in the public mind. This is the case already with the Fourth of July, which has fallen into general decline, because it has reference solely to the past, and men do not see any good which its observance is likely to do. And in the great proportion of days and seasons set apart for pleasure, there is a care-worn perplexity and solemn hopelessness in the expression of men's faces, which indicates as plainly as words could do that " the heart distrusting asks, Can this be joy ?"

But without extending these general remarks, we will proceed to say something of the literary character of the work, so far as it is possible to describe any thing so unequal, disjointed, and full of contrasts and contradictions. It is not a finished or satisfactory work, though it is evidently written by a man of uncommon ability ; nor is it pleasing, though there are many passages which one reads with deep interest and delight. Some of the characters are finely conceived, and well sustained in parts, but not self-consistent throughout. The style is often rich and expressive, and again it is slovenly, snappish, and jerking. The writer's statement of his ideas is sometimes clear and sharp as the outline of cut tin, and then shades off into that mystical nothingness in which the imagination comes out and supplies what meaning it pleases. The opinions are in general deliberate, manly, and forbearing ; but sometimes they tend to that excess and exclusiveness which so much disgrace the religion and philanthropy of the present day, destroying all their loveliness, and disarming them of half their power. So, too, in his description of the effect of Christian principles, and the result of their application to social disorders, there is something

elevated and inspiring ; but the impression left on the reader's mind is cold and forbidding, and sympathy is not awakened in any proportion to the strength and sincerity with which these great thoughts are presented. Altogether, we must say that we think more highly of the writer than his work. His talent is unquestionable ; but there is evidently something in his mental constitution, or his acquired habits of thought and feeling, which must be changed, before he can make the world acknowledge, indeed before he can himself do justice to, his powers.

But our impressions of the work can be more easily given by slightly running over the story. It begins with the interior of a cottage or log-hut, inhabited by a drunken bacchanal, known by the name of Pluck, with Brown Moll, his cynical wife ; the former engaged in cobbling shoes and drinking rum, the latter in smoking her pipe and weaving. Nothing can be better than the description of this dwelling, with its internal arrangements ; in this, and in his descriptions of dress, furniture, manners, and subjects of interest, the writer displays an astonishing familiarity with former days. His work is a perfect magazine of intelligent and faithful antiquarian lore, embracing all things, from the *skilt*, as it was called, by corruption, doubtless, from the Scottish *kilt*, — which so imperfectly protected the lower limbs of the wearer, that our December gales must have laughed it to scorn, — to the preparation which was made for the inside plenishing of the head by the spelling-books of Noah Webster and Enoch Hale. The latter of these books was recommended only by its substantial merits, while that of Noah took captive the fancies of children by the graven image of the author in the title-page, rising like the day-star from its ocean bed, and succeeded by a representation of the tree of science, which, by an unhappy association, brought up, in the wrong place and time, the vision of orchards and their fruit. It is well that minute circumstances of the kind here set down in various places should be carefully preserved, for they are all expressive ; they give a better idea than any thing else of a state of society which has passed away. To us it seems somewhat coarse and simple ; not so much so, however, by any means, as it is here represented. But we must remember that this is nothing peculiar to the time itself ; fifty years hence, our day will give the same impression to

those who follow ; our houses and public buildings, our furniture, dress, and decorations, our railroads and hotels, in short, all the appliances of social and domestic life, will be so entirely supplanted and set aside by more modern inventions, that our descendants will often shake their sides, when they hear of the simplicity and rudeness of us, their fathers. So it will be with schools and means of instruction ; and yet it will be generally conceded that such schools as New England supplied in a former day, though not quite perfect, were somewhat better than none. Let the same suggestion be applied to churches and religious teaching, and it will not seem so plain as it now is to some minds, that our fathers' views of doctrine and duty, and their ways and forms of devotion, were good for nothing but to be trodden under our feet.

The most interesting object in the cottage which we have mentioned was a little girl, the heroine of the story, who was brought to it, while an infant, by Nimrod, the eldest born of the thirsty household, a vagrant by taste and habit, and altogether more free in his language than is tolerated in the better circles. Having entered into the service of a miser in New York, Mr. Girardeau, one of that extensive class who are richer in money than in public respect or domestic affection, he is led to take a friendly interest in the old man's daughter. She had become attached to a Hessian, one of those prisoners who remained in this country after the war, a man of thoughtful and tender spirit, which answered to her deep and earnest affections. When she became his wife, they were cast out and persecuted by the angry father, till both found rest in the grave. Their child, who was intrusted to Nimrod to be disposed of in some efficient way, was conveyed by him to his father's cottage, where she became the Margaret of this story, inheriting her mother's depth and determination of character, and her father's tender and thoughtful spirit ; not precisely the best outfit, one would think, for such a life and such a home.

The effect of such companionship as the family supplied was to throw the child on her own resources for happiness. The second son, Hash, as he was familiarly called, by contracting Maharshalahashbaz, was sullen and unkind ; his bearing, on some occasions, is shocking to humanity ; and if such words as his were ever spoken in reality, they never should have been written down. The youngest boy, Chi-

lion, was of a much more refined and elevated stamp than the rest of the family ; ingenious in his employment, which consisted in supplying the family with their various articles of household use, and skilful as a musician, in drawing out life and eloquence from those unpromising sources, the fife and violin. He felt a deep interest in the girl who was called his sister ; he was too reserved to express it in words, but he was affectionately attentive to her wants, and sympathized with her deeper feelings ; so that it is not unnatural to represent the child, sustained by such a companion, as growing up with a concentration of thought and feeling not common with those whose minds and hearts are permitted to expand in free communion with their race. The trees and fields became her familiar friends ; the hill, which rose suddenly near the house and overhung the pond near which the cottage stood, was invested with a sort of human claim to reverence ; and the dark waters from their mysterious depths reflected some undefined suggestions, which affected her the more, perhaps, because they were such as she could not analyze nor understand. The author has skilfully represented the whole family, with the exception, perhaps, of the brutal Hash, as treating her with a sort of respectful tenderness ; otherwise, it would have been against nature to describe her as possessing those traits of character which are never found growing except in the sunshine of love.

She was thus enjoying nature in her way, and coming into deeper familiarity with it by means of mysterious sensations of beauty, grandeur, and power, laying up treasures of profound impression against the self-questioning season of life, which to some arrives early, to some never. We are conscious that the bright star, the crimson cloud, the autumnal red, exert an influence upon us ; we begin to ask whence that influence comes. The star, the vapor, and the leaf are inanimate things, having no power of themselves to affect us ; since they are lifeless and insensible as the clods of the valley, the influence cannot be theirs. When we begin to sound and explore our emotions, it seems to be the expression of a living heart ; it intimates the sympathy of some unseen presence ; it arrests attention like some hieroglyphical inscription, speaking to us in a language which we feel has meaning, but which we cannot read. Now, it does seem as if these voices of nature and the answering echoes which

they awaken in the heart might suggest that a mighty Intelligence made it, and a kind Spirit dwells in it, breathing through it his sympathy for the sons and daughters of men ; and yet, though benevolence is the prevailing expression, though the face of nature wears a thoughtful smile, seldom darkened by a frown, we cannot find, that, before Christianity, there was any conception of the truth which seems most evidently written in nature, that God is love. And we see in various examples, that such contemplations, if not inspired and guided by Christian principle, produce nothing more than a sentimental thoughtfulness, which has no more of the substantial character of religion itself, than the bank of clouds in the west has the rocky firmness of the mountain ridge which it resembles. Thus imagination points in one direction, while experience travels in the other. And yet, this intimacy with nature may do much, if not all ; it may prepare the heart to give a warm welcome to authorized and sure disclosures ; and this, perhaps, is all that the author intends to teach.

But Margaret had other teachers than nature, and some whose instructions were not altogether wise and true. The village schoolmaster, who is represented as an absurd old pedant, such as was never seen in New England or any other part of creation, happens to be a skeptic, outwardly conforming to established religious forms, and disguising with solemn grimaces the unbelief and contempt in his heart. He takes an interest in the girl, supplies her with books, such as the time afforded, suitable to her age, and also employs her to gather flowers for his botanical collections. He helps her to some acquaintance with heathen mythology and classical allusions, and by various kind attentions establishes an influence within her which appears to be intended to account for her intellectual opposition to the religious teaching and services of the time ; otherwise, it is not natural that a child should have such feelings. The circumstance, that so many persons of various characters, good and bad, unite at times in reverence for an unseen Being, is certainly not calculated to make a child suspicious of their sincerity ; and much less would it have the effect to prevent her reverence for the Spirit whom they profess to adore. Such, in fact, is not the tendency in maturer minds which have any sympathy with mankind. They know that there are many who are sin-

cere without being regular or consistent in their devotion, and they discover an explanation of the unevenness and disproportion which they witness in the faith and lives of others from what they find passing in their own.

Margaret is represented as attending the church, on one occasion. She had always been kept from it, by the orders of her reputed father, and by the example of the rest of the family ; but at length, she was permitted to gratify her curiosity by visiting the mysterious meeting. Having been used to gather flowers in the woods on the Sabbath, she provided herself largely with them. On her way, she attempted to convey some of them into the window of a murderer's cell ; and the prison-keeper, a coarse person, in the exercise of his vocation, thought it his duty to drive her away. She went into the church at a time when her entrance disturbed the quiet of the service, and therefore did not receive a very cordial welcome. At its close, she attended the recitation of the catechism, which, to be sure, was not much calculated either to attract or enlighten ; and from this variety of Sabbath experience, she is very unfavorably impressed with the character and devotion of Christians, and with the religion whose name they bear. If the intended moral is, that jailers should permit free communication with their prisoners under sentence of death, there are strong reasons why it should not be ; but if it is intimated that such men as Mr. Shooks should not hold that office, it is probable that there were not many at the time so rough and inhuman as he. If it is meant, that religious worship should have an air more genial and inviting, this is determined by the taste and spirit of the times, and solemn sternness was the order of that day. It would be difficult, we imagine, to devise a regular service which would have much attraction, or be of much immediate benefit, to the young ; and yet, on the whole, it is better that services should be attended even by those who do not at the time fully comprehend the purpose which they answer ; because experience shows, that, if that day is neglected or given to self-indulgence in youth, habits are formed which are never afterwards altered. There needed, doubtless, to be a relenting from the strictness of former times, because what was suited to their habits of thought and feeling is not so to ours. This comes in its season ; the danger is that which attends all similar changes, that of swinging to an extreme on the opposite side.

The manner in which Margaret is brought into an acquaintance with the Saviour and to an acknowledgment of his claims on the heart, is one which, with all our experience in reviewing, we confess ourselves unable to understand. If the author walked more decidedly with the company of antic speculators, whose reason rejects the idea of a miraculous revelation to the human race, while they think it perfectly natural that each individual should have miracles and an apocalypse of his own, we should know what to think of it, certainly ; though, like the introduction of Neptune and Æolus into a modern log-book, it would throw doubts on the soundness of the skipper's mind and the reality of the voyage. But while the sympathies of the author appear to lean in favor of the dreamers, his common sense is refractory, and refuses to go with them ; and, as there is nothing in Margaret's history or experience to account for religious impressions revived in the visions of the night, it throws the whole process of her conversion into the regions of fable, and destroys all our interest in tracing the influences brought to bear on her mind and heart. Surely the writer cannot suppose it common, that a child, from her own resources, should be able to form a perfect idea of the Saviour, to write the gospel of John, and to apply the instructions contained in it to the circumstances in which she lived. This would evidently be a greater miracle than would be implied in regarding the dream as a miraculous disclosure. But either supposition takes this interesting character out of the pale of ordinary life ; it shows that the influences about her and within her are not sufficient to account for her spiritual development ; and as supernatural communications are not always to be had in real life just when and where they are wanted, this passage has the same effect, as if, in the history of some difficult wayfaring, the traveller should be represented as borne on the wings of angels over some mountain-pass which was peculiarly difficult to tread. This vision, though it is powerfully conceived, and, had it stood by itself, might have been impressive and striking, but for some defect of reverence, is but an injury to the story. After it, we know not what to think of Margaret ; whether as a visionary enthusiast, who exalts her fancies into solid realities, or as one who has been favored with a direct, personal communication from on high.

Another person who is introduced about this time to Mar-

garet, or rather thrown in her way, in the progress of the story, is a young lady whom she meets in her rambles, who chooses to decorate herself with mystery, and to bear no other than the name of Rose. It afterwards appears that she is related to Margaret, if the circumstance, that the grandfather of the latter married a sister of Rose's grandmother, entitles her to that distinction, — which certainly, had a nearer connection with a person of the other sex been in question, would not have brought her within the prohibited degrees. She was the daughter of a clergyman, and, in a time of prevailing religious interest, had joined the church of her father; but being naturally capricious and fond of excitement, she grew weary of religious duties and devotions, and allowed an adventurer to gain an interest in her heart, — an interest which, as the individual is described, must have been wholly owing to her sentimental vein, and had no excuse in her lover's personal attractions. By this association her character is so much injured, that she is made the subject of discipline, becomes an outcast from society, and causes the ruin and death of her parents and the madness of her sister. The reader is afterwards greatly relieved to find that she had only to reproach herself with indiscretion; but she did not appear to think it worth while to clear up her reputation at the time; and, like many others in similar circumstances, was exceedingly bitter against the world's uncharitableness, without any self-upbraiding for that foolish defiance of its habits and opinions which had brought its censures down. Owing to her disgust at this society, she renounces Christianity, as if the Saviour's influence was responsible for her sufferings, and passes on to atheism without delay. By a process of reasoning like that in Cato, "if there's a Power above, he must delight in virtue, and that which he delights in must be happy," finding herself unhappy and unhonored, she could imagine no way, though possibly some one might have been pointed out, to escape from the inference that no such Being existed. She appears to have been cured at last by the attachment of a young man who was afterwards the clergyman of the community; it was rather the light of the honey-moon than that of truth which removed the darkness of her soul. On the whole, her entrance on the scene is a misfortune to the story. The intended moral, which probably is, that a spirit hardened by severity is to be

reclaimed only by kindness, might have been presented in a less questionable way. With her paraded mystery and self-glorifying remorse, Rose only hangs on the wheels of the narrative, which were somewhat overladen before.

We should also object to the instrumentality through which Margaret is brought to an acquaintance with Christian truth ; not that the character of Mr. Evelyn is not well conceived, or that his conversations are not well sustained on his part. In this respect, he has greatly the advantage of the subject of his instruction, who, when she hears of Lachryma Christi, expresses her wish to drink a barrel full of those tears, and speaks of herself, after what he has said to her, as “ filled to distention.” These may be touches of nature, but they are not in perfect keeping with her refinement and elevation. But without criticizing these matters, it seems to us that the eloquence of a lover, however convincing, is not the sort of logic best suited to the occasion. We have seen doctrinal conversions brought about, under such circumstances, with marvellous expedition ; unusual views were made perfectly satisfactory, and doctrines with which the faith was confounded before became at once clear as the day, when seen in the light of love. But though such converts are never embarrassed by doubts, and are proof against all objections, it is our misfortune or perverseness to rejoice more in those who have less clearness of vision, and a faith less omnivorous and triumphant. We have no objection to the agent employed, except the relation which is established between him and the subject of his teaching ; his views are well defined and expressed, his spirit kind and forbearing, and with the zeal of a reformer he unites a moderation the more valuable because not often found among innovators, but which is more necessary to them than is generally imagined, not perhaps for producing sudden impressions, but for accomplishing useful reforms in the thoughts and ways of men.

Before Margaret comes under his influence, however, she has been compelled to read a dark page in the history of life. When she had become sufficiently mature in years, she was employed to teach the village school for the younger scholars. She entered upon the trust with pleasure, interested her pupils by her animated and affectionate manners, and was fast establishing an influence among them, when it appeared that she had not used the little manual of faith

which had formerly been taught in the school. As there were some who were jealous of her standing, and all thought it savored of presumption in her to dispense with a form so sacred, she was called to account for so doing ; and while all wondered at her temerity, and the master, though a scoffer himself, was afraid to defend her, she maintained, firmly and gently, that she could not teach what she did not understand. In this she was doubtless right ; but it was not strange that the villagers should have insisted on what they had been taught to consider so important. The difficulty in all such cases is the spirit of exclusiveness, which has its roots in our natural selfishness, and contrives to manifest itself in every department of domestic, social, and religious life, making men intolerant of each other's proceedings and opinions, and giving them a plea of conscience under which they may indulge their passions as they will. It is not easily dislodged from the heart ; it is one thing to exclaim against it in the conduct of others, and another to release ourselves from its power. Accordingly, we see it exhibited in some of its most bitter and vengeful forms in those who boast the freedom of their souls. They have no words of contempt strong enough to apply to the narrowness of those from whom they differ, and, at the same time, they pour out the most fervent scorn and hatred on all who presume to differ from themselves. This intolerance is the scourge and pest of social existence at the present day ; not confined to religious subjects and interests, as many, in their simplicity, appear to imagine ; but boldly set forth on the brazen front of political parties, secretly cherished in moral associations, and indulged with childlike unconsciousness and excess by those who maintain that thought shall be free, without much idea, however, of allowing that privilege to any thoughts but their own.

Though Margaret is sad at losing her place, by the salary of which she hoped to serve her friends, while she was of service to the children of her charge, she found before long that she had gained in the public estimation by her sincerity ; it was shown to be genuine by her faithful discharge of her duty before. Her dismissal gives the author an opportunity of presenting one of his best characters, — Tony, the negro barber, drummer, and fiddler of the village. Such a person is commonly represented in the broadest caricature ; but his

portrait is drawn by the author with great forbearance and success. The effort of such persons to express themselves in elegant language is given in terms sufficiently ludicrous and without excess ; while the earnest attachment and hearty kindness, which are found in their best forms in that unfortunate race, are made to appear in some of the tragical scenes through which the story is led. The barber begs Margaret to let him decorate her head after the voluminous fashion of the day, saying, " Your brother Chilion has done great favors to this gentleman [meaning himself] in the musical profession ; and if the mistress would let him try his tongs on her head, it would make great commendations." Her friend Deacon Ramsdill, an excellent portrait of New England character, manifests his sympathy in his cheerful and friendly way ; and a family of Quakers is introduced, who have a fellow-feeling for one who seems to follow the inner light, and who relieve, by their simple and delicate attentions, the sense of desertion which her loss of office was calculated to give. On her way home, she calls at the house of the Tapleys, a poor and intemperate family, and there is met with tokens of kindness and confidence, which show that the outward act which removed her from her station was no expression of the real feeling of the community toward her. To this visit we would refer, as one of those descriptions in which this writer is eminently happy. Had these separate scenes been thrown disconnected into a sketch-book, we hardly know any descriptions of life, as it is in our smaller villages, which would compare with them in reality, freshness, and power. We cannot say so much of her interviews with Raxman, the Lothario of her friend Rose, whom she encounters on her way home. He appears to have been detached by her old grandfather for the purpose of gaining her good graces ; a purpose which would have been more easily accomplished by keeping himself out of her sight. No reader would have been sorry, had he absented himself from the book.

When Margaret is again established in her home, she returns to her familiarity with nature, with a spirit enjoying as much as ever, but inquiring more ; subdued into a deeper thoughtfulness by painful experience and maturer years, and asking those questions of profound interest respecting life and its Author and purpose, which some feel as an oppressive mystery, while others labor to solve them by their own

power. To these questions the many find sufficient and satisfactory answers in the word which represents us here as in the childhood of our existence, with a view of the path of duty clear before us, but perplexed by many wonders both without and within, which will unfold themselves to us if we travel that way, while mere searching, however earnest, will never be able to explain them. She is guided in her inquiries by William Ames's Marrow of Theology, a work written in Latin, but which the vernacular would not make much clearer, and from which the reader gathers not much beyond the author's mistake in calling it marrow, when the antediluvian remains are not more dry and solid bone. This work was placed in her hands by her friend, the master, who had taken away a Testament which some friend had given her, though with what purpose the author represents the old ape as making this substitution we profess ourselves wholly unable to understand. It is not natural that he should wish to undermine her faith without supplying its place with some theory of his own. The position in which he stood, of inward contempt hidden under outward conformity, is not one in which a kind heart would wish another, in whom he was interested, to share.

It is while thus employed, that young Evelyn finds her in her wood-paths, and becomes interested in her state of mind, or rather in her ; for her views and feelings are expressed in a sort of *lingo* which seems to us most unhappy, not giving in the least the impression of deep and earnest feeling, but flippant and shallow, at least to uninitiated ears. She told him of her experience on the Sabbath, and her disgust at the sepulchral faces of the worshippers, as if she had expected the pleasure of devotion to be manifested by its setting the assembly in a roar. Now, that an ingenuous and thoughtful young person might dislike the connection of religion with sadness is probable enough ; such a one might become prejudiced against Christianity from having seen it in such associations ; but whatever the feeling might be, whether of sorrow or of wonder, it would be expressed, not in cynical and misanthropic tones, but with that tender regret which the young so often feel when waked from their early dreams. Still, if the Sabbath was somewhat sombre, some other religious proceedings must have been jovial enough, one would think, to satisfy the wants of her soul. She speaks of a

camp-meeting which she attended in the woods ; this, she says, “ was the pink of what the master calls puppetry, a hornet’s nest of harlequins, saints bacchantizing.” Though we are not sufficiently well informed to know just what is meant by these phrases, we have no doubt they describe some very sprightly gatherings, where she could not be aggrieved by the sight of sepulchral faces. Then, too, she had the privilege of attending an ordination, where the gaiety rose into a livelier key. The town, she says, was full of people, and soaking in rum ; and her father, Pluck, “ when he was drunk, had far better manners than those sanctiloquent wigs exhibited.” “ It was altogether the richest specimen of deific temulency,” if our readers know what that is, that she ever beheld. “ To finish the play, one gray old Punch, with inimitable gravity, said grace at the close.” Never having seen or heard of ordinations so conducted, we cannot say whether the buffoonery was found in real life or existed only in description ; but if the fair Margaret saw what she describes, we do not understand why she should not have been in communion with those who were following their instincts, and acting out themselves to her heart’s desire.

When Margaret has given Mr. Evelyn an insight into the state of her mind, — showing that, whatever her capacities might be, she was sailing in ballast, so far as information was concerned, — the author appears much more at home in reporting that gentleman’s words to her, which are sensible, often striking and eloquent, and though much too long for a private conversation, when considered as a means of expressing the writer’s opinions on important subjects, are as much condensed as the nature of the case would allow. The speaker must have been very much interested in the person before him, not to be dismayed at the medley of ideas and impressions which she poured out in language fantastical, pedantic, and full of tragical exclamations and classical allusions. The want of depth was too apparent to make it necessary that he should take the trouble of sounding ; but as if he had divined that his words, though thrown away on her, might be of service to some readers, he went on with a full exposition of all his views of human duty and relations ; and though there is a spice of foppery in some expressions, — such as, “ most people are degraded by their piety,” which is an evident plagiarism from Mr. Vainglory, — his discourse

is, on the whole, clear, discriminating, and full of inspiring truth. He represents to her the true character of the Saviour, of whom she had talked in sentimental phrase as her "Beautiful One," — showing that it is only by sympathy with him that we can enter into the comprehension of his divine excellence, and that just in proportion as love gains influence in the heart, that wondrous image of heavenly perfection will rise in us from glory to glory, ascending to the warmth and brightness of the perfect day.

But we cannot follow him through his reasonings, and we should be still more at a loss for time to unravel the tangled skein of the story. It is needless to say, that she is convinced and professes herself a Christian, or rather finds herself a Christian, and the time is not distant when she becomes Mr. Evelyn's wife. Unfortunately for the work, though, no doubt, much to the acceptance of the persons interested, old Girardeau takes occasion to leave them a fortune of two millions when he himself can keep it no longer. With this they purchase the place where Margaret had passed her youth, with much of the adjacent country, where they build a large house of stone, make extensive and tasteful improvements, and exert themselves for the benefit of their neighbours with great success. But this success would have been much more to the purpose, had it been achieved without alliance with the dollars. Where two forces are united, it is not easy to say how much is owing to the one and how much to the other. There is an uncomfortable apprehension lest the reforms may turn out to be less genuine and lasting than in cases where it is clear that none but moral influences have been employed. Still, with the exception of this mistake, the state of society brought about by the full action of Christian influences is one which is delightful even in the most imperfect description, and we cannot but regret that the author should have condensed it into a few letters, which always give the impression that a writer has grown weary of his labor, and snatches at any expedient for hurrying to the close.

On the whole, we greatly regret that the idea of this work, if we are sure that we understand it, had not been differently carried out and presented. Nothing could be more interesting than the picture of a young girl, energetic and imaginative from her birth, thrown among coarse and profane associ-

ates, and not only keeping herself from contamination, but maintaining a quiet superiority to the influences which surround her, and coming into life with a character formed by the agency of stronger influences from within. That self-originated conceptions of the Deity and of human relations would be found in her heart is not so sure ; but it might be assumed, and the portrait drawn accordingly ; and she might also have been represented as indifferent to religion because of the associations of severity, gloom, and hollowness, which had become connected with it in her mind from the sight of its unworthy disciples ; though this is not common. It is not the simple, nor even the sensual, but those who are looking for arguments against religion, who hold it responsible for what Christians are and for all that it pleases them to do. If in the moral and intellectual solitude where she dwelt, with unsympathizing beings around her, great thoughts, lofty conceptions, and heavenly feelings should have arisen in her breast ; and if, when Christianity was first presented to her in its purity and loveliness, she should have recognized in it the ideal of her dreams, the beautiful mystery which she had all the while been learning to love, the finished portrait of that which she had seen in a glass darkly in the silent chambers of her soul ; and if, finding a new inspiration from this fulfilment of her hopes and visions, she had gone out to exert an influence, by means of sympathy, on all around her, with no wealth to buy, nor power to overawe, impressing and interesting others, till the changed feeling and aspect of the community where she lived bore testimony to the wonders love can do, we should have had a work of a character far more attractive and useful than the present, and offering a better field for the author's peculiar powers. We regret, therefore, that, instead of the more simple development of this idea, it should have been given in this unreal and impracticable form ; in which, besides the impression constantly made on the reader that no such being ever existed, the improbability is heightened by the language put into her mouth ; language which it is grievously unjust to the schoolmasters of a former generation to ascribe to their teaching or example, when it is only an euphuism of the present day, which is perfectly unaccountable in some able men who use it, though it answers good purpose to those pretenders who would cover up their defect of meaning with a jargon of strange

sight and sound. We cannot tell why this author, who, in his own person, generally employs nervous and expressive terms, should have defaced his most prominent and interesting character by making her speak in a dialect which resembles nothing ever heard in the social world, and which is wholly out of nature in a village girl, whatever the accidental circumstances of her education may have been. It destroys the beauty and truth of the conception ; we feel that she could have had no real existence ; when, but for this, and the needless touches of coarseness which we have mentioned, the idea of her character might have been original, beautiful, and true.

But we have no time to dwell farther on the development of character in this singular book. There are other parts which seem more natural to the author's taste and habits of thought ; those, for example, in which he describes the rich loveliness of the landscape and the various influences by which it acts upon the heart. Here he is more at home ; he has a discerning eye for the wonderful variety of its treasures, and he has evidently felt the power of those inaudible tones in which it addresses all who have an ear to hear them. He has noted every crimson berry and red leaf of autumn, and all the green plants and opening flowers of spring. He seems to be on terms of intimacy with all the birds of the air ; from the lightest glance of a wing, or the faintest snatches of song, he is able to detect them afar. The stillness of the deep forest, grand and solemn in its aspect and its sounds, but abounding in animated existence, heavy and oppressive as it is to the many, is best society to him. We know not where any could go to find more exact and pleasing descriptions of the scenery of New England, or of the vegetable and animal forms which give it life, than to the work before us ; and the language in which he sets them forth, though he often invents a dialect for his purpose which would have startled even Noah Webster, had he lived to hear it, is felt to be such as one would employ who was gazing or listening with delight, and wanted words of power to express his strong emotions. To this part of his work, though there is some slight confusion of seasons, we give the heartiest praise.

We will quote one passage of rich and beautiful description, which is almost entirely free from the prevailing defects of the author's manner. On the Sabbath eve after her most

unfortunate visit to the village meetinghouse, Margaret returns home, and strolls up the Indian's Head in order to view the sunset.

"Along a tangled path, trod by sheep, more by herself, and somewhat by visitors to the Pond, she wound her way to the summit. This, as we have said, was nearly one hundred feet above the level of the Pond; on the top were the venerable trunk of the Hemlock before referred to, a small cluster of firs, a few spears of yellow orchard grass and brown sorrel, sparse tufts of harebells and buttercups, bunches of sweet-fern, and mosses growing on the rocks. From the south front projected a smooth shelving rock directly over the water, forming the brow of the so called Head. This elevation commanded points of extensive and varied interest; the Pond below, its dark waters dotted with green islands, its forest-skirted shore, the outlet, the dam, the deep and perpetual gurgle of the falling water. Beyond the dam was a broken congeries, the result of wild diluvial force; horrid gulfs, high rocky pinnacles, trees aslant, green dingles; to the west, the hills crept along by gentle acclivities, and swelling upwards, formed, to an untrained eye, the apparent boundaries of this nether world. On the north was a continuation of the ridge of mountains of which the Head itself seemed to be the close, proceeding indefinitely till they met and melted into the sky. On the northwest, buried like a cloud in the dimmest distance, appeared the round, bald, but soft and azure crown of Old Umkiddin. Beyond the Pond, on the south, extended a forest without visible break or limitation. Turning to the east, one beheld the River, its meadows, the mountain beyond, and below you were portions of the village; to the south, through the tops of the woods, some of the houses in No. 4 were seen; and on the southwest lay the hamlet, Breakneck. In every direction, here and there, on side-hills, in glades of the forest, among orchard-groves, appeared the roofs of houses and barns, dappling the scene, and reflecting, in the middle of the day, a gray silvery light, like mica in granite. To this place Margaret ascended; here had she often come before, and here in her future life she often came. She went up early in the morning to behold the sun rise from the eastern mountain, and be washed by the fogs that flowed up from the River; at noon, to lie on the soft grass, under the firs, and sleep the mid-tide sleep of all nature; or ponder with a childish curiosity on the mystery of the blue sky and the blue hills; or with a childish dread, on that of the deep dark waters below her. She came up in the Fall to gather thimble, whortle, and rasp-berries that grew on the sides of the hill, and get the leaves and crimson

spires of the sumach for her mother to color with. She now came up to see the sun go down ; she sat on the grass, with her hands folding her knees. Directly on the right of the sun-setting, was an apparent jog or break in the line of the woods and hills, having on one side something like a cliff or sharp promontory, jutting towards the heavens, and overlooking what seemed like a calm clear sea beyond ; within this depression lay the top of Umkid-din, before spoken of ; here also, after a storm, appeared the first clear sky, and here at mid-day the white clouds, in long ranges of piles, were wont to repose like ships at anchor, and Margaret loved to look at that point. Nearer at hand, she could see the roads leading to Dunwich and Brandon, winding, like unrolled ribbons, through the woods. There were also pastures covered with gray rocks, looking like sheep ; the green woods in some places were intersected by fields of brown rye, or soft clover. On the whole, it was a verdant scene, — Greenness, like a hollow ocean, spread itself out before her ; the hills were green, the depths were green, the trees, grass, and weeds were green ; and in the forest, on the south margin of the Pond, the darkness, as the sun went down, seemed to form itself into caverns, and grottos, and strange fantastic shapes, in the solid Greenness. In some instances she could see the tips of the trees glancing and frolicking in the light, while the greedy shadows were crawling up from their roots, as it were out of the ground to devour them. Deep in those woods the black-cap and thrush still hooted and clang unweariedly ; she heard also the cawing of crows, and the scream of the loon ; the tinkle of bells, the lowing of cows, and the bleating of sheep were distinctly audible. Her own Robin, on the Butternut below, began his long, sweet, many-toned carol ; the tree-toad chimed in with its loud trilling chirrup ; and frogs from the Pond and Mill Brook, crooled, chubbed, and croaked. Swallows skimmed over her, and plunged into the depths below ; swarms of flies in circular squadrons skirmished in the sunbeams before her eye ; and at her side, in the grass, crickets sung their lullabies to the departing day ; a rich, fresh smell from the water, the woods, the wild-flowers, the grass-lots, floating up over the hill, regaled her senses. The surface of the Pond, as the sun receded, broke into gold-ripples, deepening gradually into carmine and vermilion ; suspended between her eye and the horizon was a table-like form of illuminated mist, a bridge of visible sunbeams shored on pointed shining piers, reaching to the ground. Margaret sat, we say, attentive to all this ; what were her feelings we know not now, we may know hereafter ; and clouds that had spent the Sabbath in their own way came with her to behold the sun-setting ; some in

long tapering bands, some in flocky rosettes, others in broad, many-folded collops. In that light they showed all colors, rose, pink, violet, and crimson, and the sky in a large circumference about the sun weltered in ruddiness, while the opposite side of the heavens threw back a purple glow. There were clouds, to her eye, like fishes; the horned-pout, with its pearly iridine breast, and iron-brown back; floating after it was a shiner with its bright golden armory; she saw the blood-red fins of the yellow-perch, the long snout of the pickerel with its glancing black eye, and the gaudy tail of the trout. She saw the sun sink half below the horizon, then all his round red face go down; and the light on the Pond withdraw, the bridge of light disappear, and the hollows grow darker and darker. A stronger and better defined glow streamed for a moment from the depths of the sun, into the sky, and flashed through the atmosphere. The little rose-colored clouds melted away in their evening joy, and went to rest up in the dark unfathomable chambers of the heavens. The fishes swam away with the sun, and plunged down the cataract of light that falls over the other side of the earth; and the broad massive clouds grew darker and grimmer, and extended themselves, like huge-breasted lions couchant which the Master had told her about, to watch all night near the gate of the sun. She sat there alone, with no eye but God's to look upon her; he alone saw her face, her expression, in that still, warm, golden sun-setting; she sat as if for her the sun had gone down, and the sky unloosed its glory; she sat mute and undisturbed, as if she were the child-queen of this great pageant of Nature." — pp. 117 – 120.

We wish that we could have found the same full sympathy for humanity manifested in this writer's descriptions of social life, which breathes through the sentiments which he expresses. Yet it is not uncommon to find this interest in social reforms, and desire to advance the welfare of mankind, evidently sincere, too, in those who do not give the impression of quick sympathy with individuals. Perhaps it is that the sharp observation, which searches out at a glance the whole of the character, has a natural tendency to caricature; faults and follies, even when slight and easily forgiven, are often so ridiculous and annoying as to destroy our respect for that which well deserves it; and it is on this account, perhaps, that this author, observing as he is, has done less justice to what is amiable and excellent in the character of New England men than might be expected in one who has such a taste for the beautiful and the good. His character is often disguised

by ungracefulness of speech and manner ; it is very seldom ostentatiously paraded for applause ; still it should be visible to all clear and earnest eyes, and is a subject on which every heart in its right place might rejoice to dwell.

As a representation of manners as they were, and in many respects are still, in New England, this book is of great value. It is a succession of pictures, full of life, and though somewhat overdrawn, not the less giving life-like imaginations of many scenes which will soon cease to be. Such is the "Training-day," which was formerly a high festival, but has lost much of its hold on the reverence and affection of the people, and there is little prospect that its former glory will ever be restored. We think our author makes rather too much of our militia system, not in the way of excessive interest, but rather on the opposite side. It does not strike us, that our train-bands are much in danger of breaking the sixth commandment ; blood and carnage are not the associations connected in our minds with their exhibitions ; as Miss Martineau says of them, every body knows that they can fight when they see reason, but we do not think them more likely to rush into the battle from their indulging in this harmless and peaceable display.

There was danger of another sort formerly connected with these celebrations, which was indeed more serious, and under which many went down to rise no more. The author has given a strong description of the excitement and intemperance of those occasions in former days. The latter vice, which was once so general, or rather the means of which were then so general, furnishes a frequent theme for sarcastic remark and severe description. There are very few passages anywhere more powerful than the account of the dark and hateful "Still." The poor child left alone in such a place at night, with an intoxicated brother, a roaring furnace, a hissing caldron, barrels of detestable drink all round her, and frightful shadows thrown by the angry fire, which, fed by dry hemlock, sounded like subterranean musketry, and threw out burning splinters on her sleeping brother's face, are brought before us as by a master's hand. But while we entirely approve the tone in which he speaks on this subject at large, we think he has fallen into the error so common with communities and individuals when suddenly reformed, — that of representing their former state as worse than it really was.

Bad enough in conscience it was ; but New England was not quite transformed into one vast bar-room. Many, many there were who walked unhurt amidst the flames ; and the inspiring manner in which the general feeling rose against the destroyer, and the energy of will exerted to resist it, showed that the heart of the people was still sound, and there was hope for the days to come.

With respect to another great evil, war, which, as the author shows, is not according to the spirit of the gospel, we do not think his course in the narrative so happy. His feeling is earnestly opposed to this practice, not only as a desolating evil, but a deadly sin. But an onslaught upon the militia is not the sort of crusading expedition which is likely to reach it ; not only the town of Livingston, but the whole country, might be exempted from military duty, without any approach to that state of peace and general good-will which Christianity is destined to bring. But this subject seems in a way to be brought up as a theme for intelligent and interested discussion ; instead of being taken into the keeping of a party, it will be investigated by active and powerful minds ; the public will at length be firmly established in some convictions which will affect the proceedings of nations, a work which the feeling of a sect would never be able to do. The duty of not resisting evil, — how far does it go ? Is the Saviour's charge, "Resist not evil," to be understood like another near it, "Give to him that asketh thee ?" or is it to be followed in full, and without reserve ? Have we a right to resist evil with our tongues, while our hands are bound, or may we take comfort in our self-denial by abusing others with the hardest words which the language affords ? Does this obligation extend only to cases in which life is concerned, and what gives the right to deprive others of liberty while the life may not be taken away ? If evil may not be resisted in one way, can it be in another ? and if not, how is any social system to hold together for a day ? These are questions lying under this matter, which need to be patiently sifted and made clear to the public mind, before it can reach a full understanding of this whole subject of war. And since no partial views will accomplish any thing more than imperfect reforms, it is well that this subject is not likely to be *chaired* like a candidate at an English election, but debated wisely and without passion by manly and independent minds.

The subject of capital punishment, which is of near kindred to the former, is here introduced in the fate of Chilion, the early friend of Margaret, whom she had always regarded as a brother. His character is finely sustained throughout, except in the single incident — for it could hardly be called an action — which brought his life to a close. A husking frolic, the festival which answers to the harvest home of other countries, was followed by a supper, which is the greatest failure in all the work. The revels ended in furious intoxication ; and Chilion, seeing a young man apparently offering some insult to Margaret, and urged on by the reproaches of Rose, who had drunk something more than the dews of night, threw a file at the offender, which severed an artery of his neck, and inflicted a wound of which he bled to death. The author found a jury, though to a sheriff it might have been a difficult matter, who brought in a verdict of wilful murder, and the judge pronounced the sentence of the law. There are some natural and affecting scenes in the prison, but we cannot say so much of the condemnation ; it is ruined by the unnatural talk of Margaret in her raving, which falls like ice upon the reader's excited feeling. But the question of capital punishment is not reached by such an imaginary case as this. Evidently nothing could be more absurd than such a penalty inflicted on such a person, where it was obvious that he could not have intended to give a fatal wound. The question is, whether capital punishment can be dispensed with. It is not to the purpose to say, that “ the worst use you can put a man to is to hang him ” ; for this, though doubtless a smart saying, would apply equally well to shutting him up in a jail. When the truth is made clear, that this fearful penalty does not answer its purpose, or that some others can be resorted to instead of it, the public mind will be ready to surrender it ; but if this is not done, it must endure till it is displaced by the advance of civilization, which has many remains of barbarism yet hanging round it, but will sooner or later lose all its taste for blood.

There are many things in this great magazine of materials to which we should be glad to direct the attention of the reader ; but we have only time to mention the description of winter, which is admirable. Thomson and Cowper have done their best with the same subject ; but our author's painting surpasses theirs as much as the December storms of New

England exceed the tempests which fall from their milder sky. The crimson fire throwing its warm red light through the room, the low beating of the flames, the hollow roar of the north wind over the chimney, the snow-drift gathering in wild and fanciful forms, the ice-plain silvered by the clear full moon, the evergreens with their snowy fringes, the sublime and beautiful forms of winter, which, desolate as its aspect is, cause it to be welcomed by many, and make it a time of delight to a few, — all these things are here presented with perfect faithfulness, and therefore with beauty and power. For the benefit of those who have not seen the work we will cite a portion of this lively and truthful sketch.

“An event common in New England is at its-height. It is snowing, and has been for a whole day and night, with a strong northeast wind. Let us take a moment when the storm intermits, and look in at Margaret’s and see how they do. But we cannot approach the place by any of the ordinary methods of travel; the roads, lanes, and by-paths are blocked up; no horse or ox could make his way through those deep drifts, immense mounds, and broad plateaus of snow. If we are disposed to adopt the means of conveyance formerly so much in vogue, whether snow-shoes or magic, we may possibly get there. The house or hut is half-sunk in a snow-bank; the waters of the Pond are covered with a solid enamel as of ivory; the oxen and the cow in the barn-yard look like great horned sheep, in their fleeces of snow. All is silence and lifelessness, and if you please to say, desolation. Hens there are none, nor turkeys, nor ducks, nor birds, nor Bull, nor Margaret. If you see any signs of a human being, it is the dark form of Hash, mounted on snow-shoes, going from the house to the barn. Yet there are the green hemlocks, and pines, and firs, green as in summer, some growing along the flank of the hill that runs north from the Indian’s Head, looking like the real snow-balls, blossoming in mid-winter, and nodding with large white flowers. But there is one token of life, the smoke coming from the low gray chimney, which, if you regard it as one, resembles a large, elongated, transparent balloon; or if you look at it by piecemeal, it is a beautiful current of bluish-white vapor, flowing upward unendingly; and prettily is it striped and particolored, as it passes successively the green trees, the bare rocks, and white crown of the hill behind; nor does its interest cease, even when it disappears among the clouds.

“Flourishing in the centre of these high-rising and broad-spreading snows, unmoved amid the fiercest onsets of the storm, comfortable in the extremity of winter, the family are all gather-

ed in the kitchen, and occupied as may be. In the cavernous fireplace burns a great fire, composed of a huge green backlog, a large green forestick, and a high cob-work of crooked and knotty refuse-wood, ivy, hornbeam, and beech. Through this the yellow flame leaps and forks, and the bluish-gray smoke flows up the ample sluiceway of the chimney. From the ends of the wood the sap fries and drips on the sizzling coals below, and flies off in angry steam. Under the forestick great red coals roll out, sparkle a semibrief, lose their grosser substance, indicate a more ethereal essence in prototypal forms of white, down-like cinders, and then fall away into brown ashes. To a stranger the room has a sombre aspect, rather heightened than relieved by the light of the fire burning so brightly at mid-day. The only connection with the external air is by the south window-shutter being left entirely open, forming an aperture through the logs of about two feet square; yet when the outer light is so obscured by a storm, the bright fire within must anywhere be pleasant. In one corner of the room sits Pluck, in a red flannel shirt and leather apron, at work on his kit mending a shoe; with long and patient vibration and equipoise he draws the threads, and interludes the strokes with snatches of songs, banter, and laughter. The apartment seems converted into a workshop; for next the shoemaker stands the shingle-maker, Hash, who with froe in one hand and mallet in the other, by dint of smart percussion, is endeavoring to rive a three-cornered billet of hemlock, on a block. In the centre of the room sits Brown Moll, with still bristling and grizzled hair, pipe in her mouth, in a yellow woollen long-short and black petticoat, winding a ball of yarn from a windle. Nearer the fire are Chilion and Margaret, the latter also dressed in woollen, with the *Orbis Pictus*, or *World Displayed*, a book of Latin and English, adorned with cuts, which the Master lent her; the former with his violin, endeavouring to describe the notes in Dr. Byles's *Collection of Sacred Music*, also a loan of the Master's, and at intervals trailing on the lead of his father in some popular air." — pp. 157 – 159.

“Chilion whispered his sister, and she went out for the purpose in question. It was not excessively cold, since the weather moderated as the storm increased, and she might have taken some interest in that tempestuous outer world. Her hens, turkeys, and ducks, who were all packed together, the former on their roost under the shed, the latter in one corner, also required feeding; and she went in and got boiled potatoes, which they seemed glad to make a meal of. The wind blazed and racketed through the narrow space between the house and the hill. Above, the flakes shaded and mottled the sky, and fell twirling, pitching,

skimble-scamble, and anon slowly and more regularly, as in a minuet ; and as they came nearer the ground, they were caught up by the current, and borne in a horizontal line, like long, quick-spun, silver threads, afar over the white fields. There was but little snow in the shed, although entirely open on the south side ; the storm seeming to devote itself to building up a drift in front. This drift had now reached a height of seven or eight feet. It sloped up like the roof of a pyramid, and on the top was an appendage like a horn, or a plume, or a marble jet d'eau, or a frozen flame of fire ; and the elements in all their violence, the eddies that veered about the corner of the house, the occasional side-blasts, still dallied, and stopped to mould it and finish it ; and it became thinner, and more tapering, and spiral ; each singular flake adjusting itself to the very tip, with instinctive nicety ; till at last it broke off by its own weight ; — then a new one went on to be formed. Under this drift lay the wood Margaret was after, and she hesitated to demolish the pretty structure. The cistern was overrun with ice ; the water fell from the spout in an ice tube, the half-barrel was rimmed about with a broad round moulding of ice, and where the water flowed off, it had formed a wavy cascade of ice, and under the cold snows the clear cold water could be heard babbling and singing as if it no whit cared for winter. Her great summer gobbling turkey attempted to mount the edge of the cistern to drink, but the wind blew, his feet slipped, and back he fell. She took a dish and watered her poultry. From the corner of the house the snow fretted and spirted, in a continuous stream of spray. While she looked at this, she saw a flock of snow-birds borne on by the winds, endeavouring to tack their course, and run in under the shelter of the house, but the remorseless elements drifted them on, and they were apparently dashed against the woods beyond. One of the birds was seen to drop, and Margaret darted out, waded through the snow, caught the luckless or lucky wanderer, and amid the butting winds, sharp snow-rack, and smothering sheets of spray, carried it into the house. In her Book of Birds, she found it was a snow-bunting, that it was hatched in a nest of reindeer's hair near the North Pole, that it had sported among eternal solitudes of rocks and ice, and come thousands of miles. It was purely white, while others of the species receive some darker shades. She put it in the cage with Robin, who welcomed the travelled stranger with due respect." — pp. 162, 163.

If the impressions of the readers of this book are like ours, they have thought the author superior to his work, which, though it abounds in proofs of talent, has many things that

to some must impair, to others utterly destroy, its attraction. If he is one of those who feel no respect for prevailing sentiments in matters of taste, he may persist in his own way, which, as it is now, will not lead him to a throne in men's minds and hearts. But if he will pay deference to established modes of communication, which, though they might be improved, are, at present, the only channels through which extensive influence can be exerted, he may gain for himself a brilliant reputation, and, what is more to his purpose, he may be a powerful and successful instrument for bringing about those reforms which he evidently has at heart, and which will be triumphantly accomplished in happier days than ours.

- ART. VI. — 1. *Biographical, Literary, and Philosophical Essays, contributed to the Eclectic Review*. By JOHN FOSTER, Author of *Essays on Decision of Character, Popular Ignorance, and Christian Morals*. New York : D. Appleton and Co. 1844. 12mo. pp. 419.
2. *Miscellaneous Essays on Christian Morals, Experimental and Practical*. Originally delivered as Lectures in the Broadmead Chapel, Bristol, England. By JOHN FOSTER. New York : D. Appleton and Co. 1844. 12mo. pp. 252.

AT the latest glimpse that we can get of the distinguished author whose name has drawn our attention to the above-mentioned publications, we find him an infirm, retired octogenarian, long, gaunt, and ghastly, careless and slovenly in dress, with a countenance deeply furrowed by a life of intense thought, and indicating great mental vigor and rigid inflexibility of character. He was revered and cherished as the last of a constellation of luminaries, that had for half a century or more shed lustre on the previously obscure and overshadowed denomination of Particular or Calvinistic Baptists. He, too, has now gone to his rest ; and, as his finished life and testimony pass to be matters of record and history, we avail ourselves of the opportunity to present such imperfect sketches of his person and character as we can obtain, and to de-